


FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL POLICY MANUAL

	SUBJECT ROAD CLOSURE GUIDELINES	POLICY NUMBER 17.30
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17.30.01 PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for assessing the need to close a roadway and for determining the appropriate time to reopen a roadway.

17.30.02 POLICY

The Florida Highway Patrol recognizes that there are no quantifiable criteria that can be used in determining the need to close or the appropriate time to re-open a roadway. These decisions rely on the judgment of FHP members on the scene based on the totality of the circumstances present. The guidelines outlined in this policy are provided as tools for members to use in making their decisions.

17.30.03 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this policy is to prepare all FHP members in the proper management of significant road closure incidents.

17.30.04 DEFINITIONS

- A. **CRITICAL INCIDENT** – For the purpose of this policy, a critical incident is an occurrence or event, natural or human-caused, which requires an emergency response to protect life or property. For example, incidents may include **critical** public health and medical emergencies, war-related disasters, terrorist threats/attacks, urban and wildfires, smoke/fog conditions affecting roadways, hurricanes/tropical storms/floods, tornadoes, nuclear accidents, aircraft accidents, hazardous material spills. Major planned events and law enforcement incidents requiring an emergency response may also be included. This definition does not include routine serious traffic crashes.
- B. **INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM (ICS)** – A systematic tool used for the command, control, and coordination of emergency response.
- C. **INCIDENT COMMANDER** – The senior and/or ranking member on scene of the incident with the duty and authority to make decisions that will safeguard lives and property until relieved of that responsibility by a member of higher rank and only after thoroughly briefing the in-coming Incident Commander of all pertinent information.

- D. **SIGNIFICANT ROAD CLOSURE** – A road closure in excess of 20 minutes that occurs on a limited access highway or main arterial roadway that is the direct result of a critical incident.

17.30.05 RESPONSIBILITIES

When a significant road closure incident occurs, the on-scene supervisor or, if none, the senior member on-scene shall serve as the Incident Commander and as such is responsible for:

- A. Determining the need for ICS activation and implementing the FHP All Hazards Plan if activation does occur.
- B. Providing oversight of the Troop's response throughout the road closure, to include monitoring after re-opening the roadway.
- C. Exercising command and control over all Troop personnel involved in any aspect of the operation.
- D. Providing the next level of command with timely updates concerning the road closure and re-opening.
- E. Assessing the adequacy of personnel coverage in the affected area(s) and requesting additional personnel through appropriate channels, if required.
- F. Soliciting input from other entities (i.e., Florida Forest Service and/or National Weather Service for incidents involving road closures due to low visibility situations). Prior to re-opening a roadway, the discussion with a representative from another entity shall include various weather and incident-related scenarios. Unsuccessful attempts to contact the FFS, NWS or other entity shall be noted in the CAD and detailed in the After Action Report.
- G. Ensuring that road closures are entered into CAD with appropriate notes for automatic distribution to the FHP website and the FDOT 511 system.
- H. Notifying the State Warning Point each time a road is closed and re-opened. 1-800-320-0519 or (850) 413-9911.
- I. Ensuring all reasonable assistance is provided to municipal and county agencies reestablishing and maintaining order in affected areas.
- J. Ensuring that meal and personnel breaks are provided for members working in affected areas.
- K. Ensuring the continued monitoring of the roadway until the hazard no longer threatens the safe use of the roadway.
- L. Ensuring the After Action Report is prepared and forwarded through appropriate channels to the Director within 30 days after termination of the incident.
- M. Coordinating activities of the PAO.

- N. Ensuring the overall safety of all those responding to the incident.

17.30.06 PROCEDURES

A. GUIDELINES FOR CONSIDERATION IN CLOSING OR RE-OPENING A ROADWAY

The following items should be considered in making a decision to close or reopen a roadway.

1. The safety of the motoring public.
2. Full obstruction of the roadway.
3. If the roadway is partially obstructed, the safety of victims and emergency response personnel.
4. If the roadway is obstructed by a traffic crash, activation of Rapid Incident Scene Clearance (RISC) if available.
5. Damage to the roadway.
6. Roadway characteristics – speed limit, divided highway, straight/curved, lighting conditions.
7. Distance of visibility.
8. Weather conditions/warnings/advisories – torrential rain, ice, dense fog – consider obtaining a spot weather forecast and/or LVORI.
9. Other ambient conditions present – wildfires, smoke, temperature, hazardous materials.
10. Time of day – fog is most likely to develop and become most dense in the early morning hours (12AM – 6AM)
11. Time of year – dense fog is most prevalent during cool moist months (January – March); yet can occur anytime.
12. Geographic considerations / hazard proximity – location of fire / fog. Fog or smoke will tend to travel and be denser in low-lying areas.
13. The potential for dense fog to mix with localized smoke from prescribed burns or wildfires.
14. Detour routes and availability of detour signs
15. Availability of warning signs and barricades. After reopening a roadway, consideration should be given to staging the signs and barricades should the need to close the roadway reoccur.
16. Traffic density and the occurrence or possibility of secondary collisions.

17. Availability of assistance from other agencies.

B. TRAINING

Annually, in or around the month of October, all members and communications personnel will undergo training regarding issues involved with significant road closures. The Chief Training Officer, or designee, will coordinate with the Department's Learning and Development Office and the Division's Emergency Operations Coordinator to set up, maintain, and document the required training. The Division's Emergency Operations Coordinator will ensure the training program is current before delivery each year. The DHSMV iLearn system shall serve as a reference library to all members and communications personnel. As Subject Matter Experts, other entities (i.e., Florida Forest Service, Florida Division of Emergency Management, and National Weather Service) may assist with the curriculum development. Topics shall include, yet are not limited to:

1. Best practices to safely close, monitor and reopen a roadway.
2. Communication techniques – (what needs to be communicated, why, when, to whom, and by what means of communication.)
3. Public Affairs – how to utilize the media to assist in the road closure/re-opening.
4. Low Visibility Occurrence Risk Index (LVORI), the National Weather Service and the Florida Forest Service/local Fire Departments' role in significant road closures due to smoke, fog and limited visibility.
5. Any applicable changes in FHP policies and procedures.